ELEGY

ON

CAPTAIN COOK.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ODE TO THE SUN.

BY MISS SEWARD.

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AN ELEGY

ON CAPTAIN COOK.

SORROWING, the Nine beneath yon blaſted yew
Shed the bright drops of Pity's holy dew;
Mute are their tuneful tongues, extinct their fires;
Yet not in ſilence ſleep their ſilver lyres;
To the bleak gale they vibrate ſad and ſlow,
In deep accordance to a Nation's woe.

Ye, who ere while for COOK's illuſtrious brow
Pluck'd the green laurel, and the oaken bough,
Hung the gay garlands on the trophied oars,
And pour'd his fame along a thouſand ſhores,
Strike the ſlow death-bell!—weave the ſacred verſe,
And ſtrew the cypreſs o'er his honor'd hearſe;
In ſad proceſſion wander round the ſhrine,
And weep him mortal, whom ye ſung divine!

Say firſt, what Pow'r inſpir'd his dauntleſs breaſt
With ſcorn of danger, and inglorious reſt,
To quit imperial London's gorgeous plains,
Where, rob'd in thouſand tints, bright Pleaſure reigns;
In cups of ſummer-ice her nectar pours,
And twines, 'mid wint'ry ſnows, her roſeate bow'rs?
Where Beauty moves with undulating grace,
Calls the ſweet bluſh to wanton o'er her face,
On each fond Youth her ſoft artillery tries,
Aims her light ſmile, and rolls her frolic eyes?

What Pow'r inſpir'd his dauntleſs breaſt to brave
The ſcorch'd Equator, and th' Antarctic wave?
Climes, where fierce ſuns in cloudleſs ardors ſhine,
And pour the dazzling deluge round the Line;
The realms of froſt, where icy mountains riſe,
'Mid the pale ſummer of the polar ſkies?—
IT WAS HUMANITY!—on coaſts unknown,
The ſhiv'ring natives of the frozen zone,
And the ſwart Indian, as he faintly ſtrays
"Where Cancer reddens in the ſolar blaze,"

She bade him ſeek;—on each inclement ſhore
Plant the rich ſeeds of her exhauſtleſs ſtore;
Unite the ſavage hearts, and hoſtile hands,
In the firm compact of her gentle bands;
Strew her ſoft comforts o'er the barren plain,
Sing her ſweet lays, and conſecrate her fane.

IT WAS HUMANITY!—O Nymph divine!
I ſee thy light ſtep print the burning Line!
There thy bright eye the dubious pilot guides,
The faint oar ſtruggling with the ſcalding tides.—
On as thou lead'ſt the bold, the glorious prow,
Mild, and more mild, the ſloping ſun-beams glow;
Now weak and pale the leſſen'd luſtres play,
As round th' horizon rolls the timid day;
Barb'd with the ſleeted ſnow, the driving hail,
Ruſh the fierce arrows of the polar gale;
And thro' the dim, unvaried, ling'ring hours,
Wide o'er the waves incumbent horror low'rs.

From the rude ſummit of yon frozen ſteep,
Contraſting Glory gilds the dreary deep !
Lo !---deck'd with vermeil youth and beamy grace,
Hope in her ſtep, and gladneſs in her face,
Light on the icy rock, with outſtretch'd hands,
The Goddeſs of the new Columbus ſtands.
Round her bright head the plumy * Peterels ſoar,
Blue as her robe, that ſweeps the frozen ſhore ;
Glows her ſoft cheek, as vernal mornings fair,
And warm as ſummer-ſuns her golden hair ;
O'er the hoar waſte her radiant glances ſtream,
And courage kindles in their magic beam.
She points the ſhip it's mazy path, to thread
† The floating fragments of the frozen bed.

* *Peterels ſoar.*—The peterel is a bird found in the frozen ſeas ; its neck and tail are white, and its wings of a bright blue.

† *The floating fragments.*—" In the courſe of the laſt twenty-four hours, we paſſed through ſeveral fields of broken ice ; they were in general narrow, but of conſiderable extent. In one part the pieces of ice were ſo cloſe, that the ſhip had much difficulty to *thread* them."

While o'er the deep, in many a dreadful form,
The giant Danger howls along the ſtorm,
Furling the * iron ſails with numbed hands,
Firm on the deck the great Adventurer ſtands;
Round glitt'ring mountains hears the billows rave,
And the † vaſt ruin thunder on the wave.—
Appall'd he hears!—but checks the riſing ſigh,
And turns on his firm band a gliſt'ning eye.—
Not for himſelf the ſighs unbidden break,
Amid the terrors of the icy wreck;
Not for himſelf ſtarts the impaſſion'd tear,
Congealing as it falls;—nor pain, nor fear,
Nor Death's dread darts, impede the great deſign,
Till ‡ Nature draws the circumſcribing line.

* *Furling the iron ſails.*—" Our ſails and rigging were ſo frozen, that they ſeemed plates of iron."

† *And the vaſt ruin.*—The breaking of one of theſe immenſe mountains of ice, and the prodigious noiſe it made, is particularly deſcribed in Cook's ſecond voyage to the ſouth Pole.

‡ *Till Nature*, &c.—" After running four leagues this courſe, with the ice on our ſtarboard ſide, we found ourſelves quite embay'd, the ice extending from north-north-eaſt, round by the weſt and ſouth, to eaſt, in one compact body; the weather was tolerably clear, yet we could ſee no end to it."

Huge

Huge rocks of ice th' arreſted ſhip embay,
And bar the gallant Wanderer's dangerous way.—
His eye regretful marks the Goddeſs turn
Th' aſſiduous prow from its relentleſs bourn.

And now antarctic Zealand's drear domain
Frowns, and o'erhangs th' inhoſpitable main.
On it's chill beach this dove of human-kind
For his long-wand'ring foot ſhort reſt ſhall find,
Bear to the coaſt the * olive-branch in vain,
And quit on wearied wing the hoſtile plain.—
With jealous low'r the frowning natives view
The ſtately veſſel, and th' advent'rous crew;
Nor fear the brave, nor emulate the good,
But ſcowl with ſavage thirſt of human blood!

And yet there were, who in this iron clime
Soar'd o'er the herd on Virtue's wing ſublime;

* *The olive-branch.*—" To carry a green branch in the hand on landing, is a pacific ſignal, univerſally underſtood by all the iſlanders in the South Seas."

Rever'd

Rever'd the ſtranger-gueſt, and ſmiling ſtrove
To ſoothe his ſtay with hoſpitable love;
Fann'd in full confidence the friendly flame,
Join'd plighted hands, and * name exchang'd for name.
To theſe the Hero leads † his living ſtore,
And pours new wonders on th' uncultur'd ſhore;
The ſilky fleece, fair fruit, and golden grain;
And future herds and harveſts bleſs the plain.
O'er the green ſoil his Kids exulting play,
And ſounds his clarion loud the Bird of day;
The downy Gooſe her ruffled boſom laves,
Trims her white wing, and wantons in the waves;
Stern moves the Bull along th' affrighted ſhores,
And countleſs nations tremble as he roars.

* *And name exchang'd.*—The exchange of names is a pledge of amity among theſe iſlanders, and was frequently propoſed by them to Captain Cook and his people; ſo alſo is the joining noſes.

† *His living ſtore.*—Captain Cook left various kinds of animals upon this coaſt, together with garden-ſeeds, &c. The Zealanders had hitherto ſubſiſted upon fiſh, and ſuch coarſe vegetables as their climate produced; and this want of better proviſion, it is ſuppoſed, induced them to the horrid practice of eating human fleſh.

So when the Daughter of eternal Jove,
And Ocean's God, to bleſs their Athens ſtrove,
The maſſy trident with gigantic force
Cleaves the firm earth—and gives the ſtately Horſe;
He paws the ground, impatient of the rein,
Shakes his high front, and thunders o'er the plain.
Then Wiſdom's Goddeſs plants the embryon ſeed,
And bids new foliage ſhade the ſultry mead;
'Mid the pale green the tawny olives ſhine,
And famiſh'd thouſands bleſs the hand divine.

Now the warm ſolſtice o'er the ſhining bay,
Darts from the north its mild meridian ray;
Again the Chief invokes the riſing gale,
And ſpreads again in deſart ſeas the ſail;
O'er dangerous ſhoals his ſteady ſteerage keeps,
O'er * walls of coral, ambuſh'd in the deeps;

* *Walls of coral.*—The coral rocks are deſcribed as riſing perpendicularly from the greateſt depths of the ocean, inſomuch that the ſounding-line could not reach their bottom; and yet they were but juſt covered with water.—Theſe rocks are now found to be fabricated by ſea-inſects.

Strong

Strong Labour's hands the crackling cordage twine,
And * ſleepleſs Patience heaves the ſounding-line.

On a lone beach a † rock-built temple ſtands,
Stupendous pile! unwrought by mortal hands;
Sublime the ponderous turrets riſe in air,
And the wide roof baſaltic columns bear;
Thro' the long aiſles the murm'ring tempeſts blow,
And Ocean chides his daſhing waves below.
From this fair fane, along the ſilver ſands,
Two ſiſter-virgins wave their ſnowy hands;
Firſt ‡ gentle Flora—round her ſmiling brow
Leaves of new forms, and flow'rs uncultur'd glow;

* *And ſleepleſs Patience.*—" We had now paſſed ſeveral months with a man conſtantly in the chains heaving the lead."

† *A rock-built temple.*—" On one part of this iſle there was a ſolitary rock, riſing on the coaſt with arched cavities, like a majeſtic temple."

‡ *Firſt gentle Flora.*—Flora is the Goddeſs of modern Botany, and Fauna of modern Zoology: hence the pupils of Linnæus call their books *Flora Anglica—Fauna Danica*, &c.—" The Flora of one of theſe iſlands contain'd thirty new plants."

Thin folds of * vegetable ſilk, behind,
Shade her white neck, and wanton in the wind;
Strange ſweets, where'er ſhe turns, perfume the glades,
And fruits unnam'd adorn the bending ſhades.
—Next Fauna treads, in youthful beauty's pride,
A playful † Kangroo bounding by her ſide;
Around the Nymph her beauteous ‡ Pois diſplay
Their varied plumes, and trill the dulcet lay;
A § Giant-bat, with leathern wings outſpread,
Umbrella light, hangs quiv'ring o'er her head.

* *Vegetable ſilk.*—In New-Zealand is a flag of which the natives make their nets and cordage. The fibres of this vegetable are longer and ſtronger than our hemp and flax; and ſome, manufactured in London, is as white and gloſſy as fine ſilk. This valuable vegetable will probably grow in our climate.

† *A playful Kangroo.*—The kangroo is an animal peculiar to thoſe climates. It is perpetually jumping along on its hind legs, its fore legs being too ſhort to be uſed in the manner of other quadrupeds.

‡ *Beauteous Pois.*—" The poi-bird, common in thoſe countries, has feathers of a fine mazarine blue, except thoſe of the neck, which are of a beautiful ſilver grey; and two or three ſhort white ones, which are in the pinion-joint of the wing. Under its throat hang two little tufts of curled white feathers, called its *poies*, which, being the Otaheitean word for ear-rings, occaſioned our giving that name to the bird; which is not more remarkable for the beauty of its plumage, than for the exquiſite melody of its note."

§ *A Giant-bat.*—The bats which Captain Cook ſaw in ſome of theſe countries were of incredible dimenſions, meaſuring three feet and an half in breadth, when their wings were extended.

As o'er the cliff her graceful ſtep ſhe bends,
On glitt'ring wing her inſect-train attends.
With diamond-eye her ſcaly tribes ſurvey
Their Goddeſs-nymph, and gambol in the ſpray.

With earneſt gaze the ſtill, enamour'd crew
Mark the fair forms; and, as they paſs, purſue;
But round the ſteepy rocks, and dangerous ſtrand,
Rolls* the white ſurf, and ſhipwreck guards the land.

So, when of old, Sicilian ſhores along,
Enchanting Syrens trill'd th' alluring ſong,
Bound to the maſt the charm'd Ulyſſes hears,
And drinks the ſweet tones with inſatiate ears;
Strains the ſtrong cords, upbraids the proſp'rous gale,
And ſighs, as Wiſdom ſpreads the flying ſail.

* *Rolls the white ſurf.*—"As we paſſed this iſland, many of its trees had an unuſual appearance, and the richneſs of the vegetation much invited our naturaliſts to land, but their earneſt wiſhes were in vain, from the dangerous reefs and the violence of the ſurfs."

Now

Now leads HUMANITY the deſtin'd way,
Where all the Loves in Otaheite ſtray.
To bid the Arts diſcloſe their wond'rous pow'rs,
To bid the Virtues conſecrate the bow'rs,
She gives her Hero to its blooming plain.—
Nor has he wander'd, has he bled in vain!
His lips perſuaſive charm th' uncultur'd youth,
Teach Wiſdom's lore, and point the path of Truth.
See! * chaſten'd love in ſofter glances flows,
See! with new fires parental duty glows.

Thou ſmiling Eden of the ſouthern wave,
Could not, alas! thy grateful wiſhes ſave
That angel-goodneſs, which had bleſs'd thy plain?—
Ah! vain thy gratitude, thy wiſhes vain!
On a far diſtant, and remorſeleſs ſhore,
Where human fiends their dire libations pour;
Where treachery, hov'ring o'er the blaſted heath,
Poiſes with ghaſtly ſmile the darts of death,

* *Chaſten'd love.*—Captain Cook obſerves, in his ſecond voyage, that the women of Otaheite were grown more modeſt, and that the barbarous practice of deſtroying their children was leſſened.

Pierc'd

Pierc'd by their venom'd points, your favorite bleeds,
And on his limbs the luſt of hunger feeds!

Thus when, of old, the Muſe-born Orpheus bore
Fair Arts and Virtues to the Thracian ſhore;
Struck with ſweet energy the warbling wire,
And pour'd perſuaſion from th' immortal lyre;
As ſoften'd brutes, the waving woods among,
Bow'd their meek heads, and liſten'd to the ſong;
Near, and more near, with rage and tumult loud,
Round the bold bard th' inebriate maniacs crowd.—
Red on th' ungrateful ſoil his life-blood ſwims,
And Fiends and Furies tear his quiv'ring limbs!

Gay Eden of the ſouth, thy tribute pay,
And raiſe, in pomp of woe, thy Cook's * Morai!

* *Morai.*—The Morai is a kind of funeral altar, which the people of Otaheite raiſe to the memory of their deceaſed friends. They bring to it a daily tribute of fruits, flowers, and the plumage of birds. The chief mourner wanders around it in a ſtate of apparent diſtraction, ſhrieking furiouſly, and ſtriking at intervals a ſhark's tooth into her head. All people fly her, as ſhe aims at wounding not only herſelf, but others.

Bid mild Omiah bring his choiceſt ſtores,
The juicy fruits, and the luxuriant flow'rs;
Bring the bright plumes, that drink the torrid ray,
And ſtrew each laviſh ſpoil on Cook's Morai!

Come, Oberea, hapleſs fair-one! come,
With piercing ſhrieks bewail thy Hero's doom!—
She comes!—ſhe gazes round with dire ſurvey!—
Oh! fly the mourner on her frantic way.
See! ſee! the pointed ivory wounds that head,
Where late the Loves impurpled roſes ſpread;
Now ſtain'd with gore, her raven-treſſes flow,
In ruthleſs negligence of mad'ning woe;
Loud ſhe laments!—and long the Nymph ſhall ſtray
With wild unequal ſtep round Cook's Morai!

But ah!—aloft on Albion's rocky ſteep,
That frowns incumbent o'er the boiling deep,
Solicitous, and ſad, a ſofter form
Eyes the lone flood, and deprecates the ſtorm.—

Ill-fated

Ill-fated matron!---for, alas! in vain
Thy eager glances wander o'er the main!---
'Tis the vex'd billows, that inſurgent rave,
Their white foam ſilvers yonder diſtant wave,
'Tis not his ſails!---thy huſband comes no more!
His bones now whiten an accurſed ſhore!---
Retire,---for hark! the ſea-gull ſhrieking ſoars,
The lurid atmoſphere portentous low'rs;
Night's ſullen ſpirit groans in ev'ry gale,
And o'er the waters draws the darkling veil,
Sighs in thy hair, and chills thy throbbing breaſt---
Go, wretched mourner!---weep thy griefs to reſt!

Yet, tho' through life is loſt each fond delight,
Tho' ſet thy earthly ſun in dreary night,
Oh! raiſe thy thoughts to yonder ſtarry plain,
And own thy ſorrow ſelfiſh, weak, and vain;
Since, while Britannia, to his virtues juſt,
Twines the bright wreath, and rears th' immortal buſt;

While on each wind of heav'n his fame ſhall riſe,
In endleſs incenſe to the ſmiling ſkies;
THE ATTENDANT POWER, that bade his ſails expand,
And waft her bleſſings to each barren land,
Now raptur'd bears him to th' immortal plains,
Where Mercy hails him with congenial ſtrains;
Where ſoars, on Joy's white plume, his ſpirit free,
And angels choir him, while he waits for THEE.

ODE

ODE TO THE SUN.

Prize POEM at Batheaſton, April 1779.

I.

LORD of the Planets! in their courſe
Thro' the long tracts of never-ceaſing day,
Who to their orbs, with matchleſs force,
Bendeſt their rapid, wild, reluctant way;
Tho' midſt the vaſt and glitt'ring maze
Of countleſs worlds, that round thee blaze,
Small, dim, and cold, our little Earth appears,
Thy life-enkindling light ſhe ſhares:
From the chill Pole's far-ſhining mountains frore,
To ſandy Afric's ſultry ſhore,
Wide o'er her plains thy living luſtres ſtream,
In Lapland's long pale day, and ſwart Numidia's beam.

II.

For her, with delegated right,
Thy virgin-ſiſter in thy abſence ſhines,
Throws her ſoft robe of ſnowy light
O'er ſullen Night's opake and ſhadowy ſhrines;
Thy watchful centinel, ſhe reigns
Controuler of the watry plains,
Onward her ſilver arm the Ocean guides,
Or daſhes back the impetuous tides.
But thou, on the green wave's capacious bed,
Haſt light, and life, and gladneſs ſhed,
Thro' liquid mountains, as they roll,
Darting the beauteous beam, the vivifying ſoul,

III.

That paints the ſhell's meand'ring mould,
Or ſpots the twinkling fin with gold;
That gives the diamond's eye to blaze
With all thy bright and arrowy rays.---
Low in the billowy hold,

Where

Where the mighty whales are ſtraying,
And the burniſh'd dolphins playing,
There, with tremulous light, thou charmeſt
Nations baſking in thy gleam;
And e'en there thy earth thou warmeſt
With thy mild prolific beam:
From the dwarf coral, with his vermeil horns,
Or ſea-moſs, matted round her briny caves,
To the broad oak, that Albion's cliff adorns,
And bears her ſons triumphant o'er the waves;
Each ſtem, root, leaf, fair fruit, and flowret bright,
Luſtre and fragrance drink from thy all-chearing light.

IV.

Remov'd from its more ardent ray,
In graſſy Albion's deep umbrageous vales,
Thou bid'ſt them bloom in ſoft array,
And breathe ſweet incenſe on her vernal gales.
Thy red Morn bluſhes on her ſhores,
And liquid gems profuſely pours;

Thy

Thy gay Noon glows with unoppreſſive beams,
And glitters on her winding ſtreams;
Thy modeſt Evening draws the deep'ning ſhades
O'er her green hills, and bowery glades,
Till the fair Months, with faded charms,
Shrink in the chilly graſp of Winter's icy arms.

V.

But this highly-favoured year,
From thee with gifts peculiar ſprung;
At thy command Autumna fair
Her golden veſt o'er ſhiv'ring Winter flung;
And bid him his pale ling'ring hours
Gaily deck with fragrant flow'rs;
For his hoar brow matur'd the Violet wreath,
From his wan lip bid Pleaſure breathe;
No more he blaſts the plain, or warps the tide,
But throws his iron rod aſide,
His ſoften'd gale ſerenely blows,
Till with Italia's charms hybernal Albion glows.

VI.

Great Sun! like thee, with effluence bright,
Rich ſource of intellectual light,
Benign Humanity appears,
From Sorrow ſhielding, and from Cares,
And Poverty's ſad blight.
Genius hails thee, Pow'r propitious!
Ripening in thy ſmile auſpicious;
Light divine! thy bounty ſtreaming
* Conſecrates this deſtin'd ground,
On the vaſe thy luſtre beaming,
" Inſpiration breathes around."
The nobler pleaſures of the moral world
From this internal radiance gently flow,
As when, oh Sun! thy ſummer-beams are hurl'd,
And Air, Earth, Ocean, all exulting glow.—
Great Sun! with plenty ever bleſs theſe plains,
Where Genius ſtrikes the Lyre, and ſoft-eyed Mercy reigns!

* It muſt be remembered, that this is a charitable as well as a poetic inſtitution.

F I N I S.